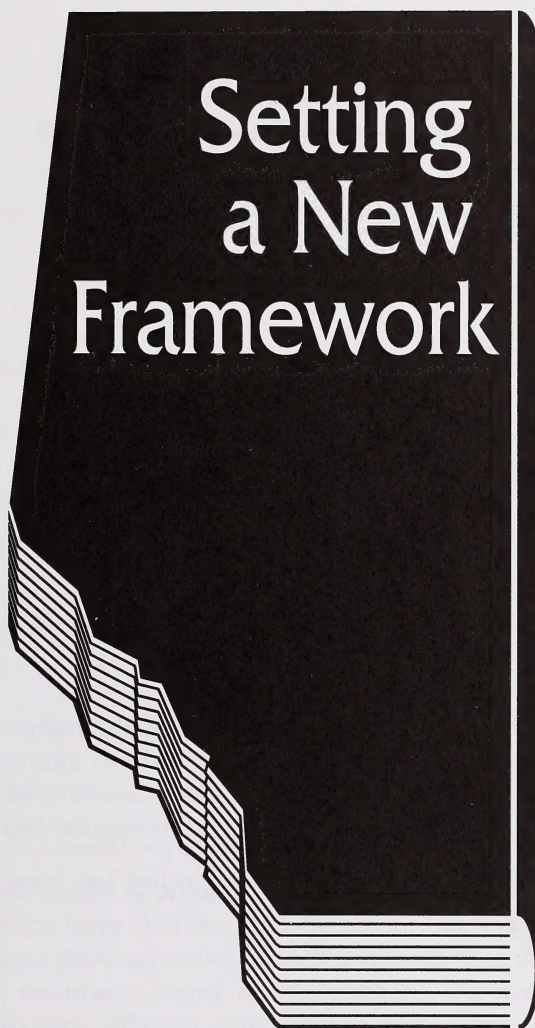


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**Report and Recommendations
of the Private Schools Funding Task Force
February 1998**

Setting a new framework : Report and Recommendations
of the Private Schools Funding Task Force.

ISBN 0-7732-9924-6

1. Private schools – Alberta – Finance. 2. Private schools – Alberta –
Business management. I. Title. II. Private Schools Funding Task Force.

LC51.2.A3. S495 1998

371.02

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA**

**Ron Stevens, QC, MLA
Calgary Glenmore Constituency**

February 17, 1998

**Honourable Gary G. Mar, QC
Minister of Education
227 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6**

Dear Minister:

On behalf of the Private Schools Funding Task Force, I am pleased to submit our report and recommendations.

We believe that our recommendations strike an appropriate balance among the various views we heard throughout our review. It is our considered opinion that the recommendations provide a sound basis for future policy on funding for accredited private schools and special education private schools in Alberta.

As Chairman of the Task Force, I would like to extend my personal thanks to the members of the Task Force: Gary Duthler, Dale Erickson, Patricia Ewanishan, and Jim Prentice. These four people devoted hours of their personal time listening to the views of Albertans, reviewing countless pages of information, and weighing alternatives. Although they come from very different perspectives, they were able to find common ground and achieve a consensus. Albertans have been served well by these four people and it has been a pleasure for me to work with them.

Undertaking a review as complex and extensive as this one, would not be possible without the help and assistance of many people working behind the scenes. On behalf of the Task Force, I would like to extend our thanks to the staff at Alberta Education who arranged our public meetings and supported the review process every step of the way. In particular, the Task Force would like to thank Ron Taylor. Ron was instrumental in facilitating the review process, responding to literally hundreds of requests for information from Task Force members, and meticulously going through every workbook, letter and submission made to the Task Force. Ron is an exemplary public servant.

Honourable Gary G. Mar, QC
February 17, 1998
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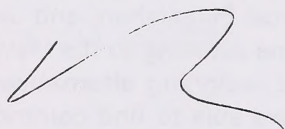
We would also like to extend our thanks to Valerie Keates, Claudette Miller, April Rose, Janet Harding, Marjorie Morris, Ruth Ann Fauser, Merla Bolender, Toni Hafso and Charlotte Landry, all of Alberta Education, and Andrew Curran of Alberta Community Development. Each of these individuals made an important contribution to the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force also had the help and support of Peggy Garritty. Peggy worked with the Task Force to prepare our initial discussion paper and workbook and also to put the Task Force's thoughts and recommendations into the written report we are submitting today. Praxis assisted the Task Force by compiling the thousands of workbooks, submissions and letters we received. And the Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta provided the Task Force with a summary of current policies and practices at funded private schools.

Finally, we would like to thank the literally thousands of Albertans who took the time to express their views to the Task Force. We hope that our report captures the many and varied opinions we heard on this important issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this review of funding for Alberta's private schools. We have learned a great deal. And we hope that our recommendations provide guidance for decisions Government will make about future funding levels for private schools.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ron Stevens', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ron Stevens, QC, MLA
Chair, Private Schools Funding Task Force

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Overview

In June 1997, the Private Schools Funding Task Force began its work. Our task was twofold:

- To provide Albertans with the opportunity to express their views on how private schools should be funded and
- To recommend a funding framework for Alberta's accredited private schools.

Private Schools Funding Task Force

Chair

*Ron Stevens, Q.C.
M.L.A., Calgary Glenmore*

Members

*Gary Duthler
Executive Director
Association of Independent
Schools and Colleges in Alberta*

*Dr. Dale Erickson
Director, Association Affairs
Alberta School Boards
Association*

*Jim Prentice, Q.C.
Parent Representative*

*Patricia Ewanishan
Parent Representative*

Specifically, we were asked to:

- Review the current level of funding for accredited private schools and designated special education private schools
- Review the tuition fees levied by private schools
- Review the right of private schools to select students
- Examine the differences in public accountability for public and private school operators
- Review the legislation governing private schools and
- Examine alternate funding frameworks.

This report provides an overview of what the Task Force heard and learned throughout the review process and it sets out our recommendations for a funding framework for accredited private schools.

It is important to put this report in a context. Throughout the review process, Task Force members met with literally hundreds of Albertans, listened to their views and carefully considered their presentations. We read stacks of reports and written submissions, reviewed research, and looked back at the history of how private schools came to operate in the province and also receive public funding.

We've learned a lot. And we would like to begin this report with some overall observations.

First, Task Force members heard strong support for Alberta's public education system. Public education is the cornerstone of Alberta's education system. Private schools have an important role to play as a complement to the public system. Nothing in the Task Force's recommendations is intended to detract from strong support for Alberta's public schools.

Second, there are strongly held views on both sides of the issue of funding for private schools. Often we found there was little common ground among the proponents of different views and little willingness to compromise or seek mutual understanding.

Third, myths and misconceptions are common. People assume things and jump to certain conclusions, whether or not the facts support their case. In our discussion paper, we tried to set out the facts as clearly as possible, but the reality is that the myths persist for many people.

Fourth, there is a lot of talk about “rights” as if these rights were written in law. Yes, parents have a right to choose to send their children to a private school. That right is provided in the School Act. But beyond that, it is important to distinguish between beliefs and opinions, and legislated rights. We all have differing views, but those views do not translate into differing rights. The Task Force takes the view that “rights” must be considered in relation to legislation not to opinions.

Finally, the Task Force is as diverse as Albertans when it comes to the issues involved. We represent the full spectrum of views on whether or not private schools should receive funding, how much, and on what basis. In our work, however, we have tried to set aside our personal views and seek common ground.

Most important, we’ve tried to strike a balance.

The Task Force believes that private schools meet a public good, they meet the needs of certain students, they reflect the diversity of Alberta society, and they provide choices for parents. If private schools offer the Alberta Program of Studies and meet the same standards as public schools, they should receive public funding.

While some have suggested private schools should receive no public funding whatsoever, the Task Force also understands that, for many years, private schools in Alberta have received some public funding - and there’s no going back. To withdraw funding from private schools now would not be in the best interests of the children involved - and that must be the most important consideration.

On the other hand, the Task Force also does not support the view that private schools should be eligible for all the same funding as public schools. Private schools are able to select students and charge tuition fees. Those two facts are essential to their nature as private schools. We also believe that, if parents choose to send their children to private schools, they should be responsible for some of the costs involved.

Within that perspective, highlights of the Task Force's 26 recommendations are as follows:

- Accredited private schools should continue to be eligible for some public funding provided that certain conditions and standards are met.
- Funding for private schools should be set as a proportion of the instructional funding provided to public schools. The Task Force recommends that funded private schools should receive 60 percent of the basic instruction grant provided to public schools.
- Funded private schools should not be eligible for provincial funding to support transportation, administration or the operation and maintenance of schools, or to build new schools or renovate existing ones. They also should not be eligible for a portion of education property tax. This is consistent with current policy.
- To be eligible for funding, private schools should be required to meet the same requirements for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies and meet the same educational standards as public schools. Additional recommendations from the Task Force are intended to ensure that the quality of education in funded private schools is maintained.
- No limits should be set on the tuition fees funded private schools can charge.
- Parents of children in funded private schools currently do not have the same avenues of appeals as parents of children in public schools and the Task Force recommends that no changes should be made to this policy. However, in the case of expulsions, funded private schools should maintain responsibility for the student's education until the end of the school year. This could involve making alternative arrangements for the student and transferring funding or paying for the alternative arrangements.
- Many funded private schools are operated by societies which are made up of a majority of parents. In cases where parents do not make up the majority, these private schools should be required to establish parent councils.
- Special education private schools should be considered as a separate category. Students who have special education needs should receive equivalent funding whether they attend a public school or a special education private school. If the school board, in consultation with a child's parents, determines that the child has a special education need,

the parents should be able to choose to send their child to an appropriate program in either a public school or a special education private school.

With these recommendations, we hope we have achieved several things. We hope we've provided a sound framework for future decisions on funding for private schools. We hope we've found the right balance among the many and diverse views of Albertans on these important issues. We hope we've provided a common base of information that may, in time, lead to more common understanding among people directly involved in public and private schools. And we hope that our recommendations will help ensure that Alberta's children continue to get an excellent education, whether that's in public or private schools.

The review process

To get a better understanding of the issues, the facts, and the views of Albertans, the Task Force used a combination of approaches.

Setting the framework for discussions

We prepared a discussion paper - *Setting the Stage for Discussions* - designed to provide a common starting point, a solid base of information, and to outline the key issues involved. We also prepared a companion workbook - *Addressing the Questions* - outlining a series of questions for Albertans to consider.

Copies of the discussion paper and workbook were distributed beginning on September 15, 1997. Distribution included MLA offices, provincial education organizations, superintendents of schools, school boards, school councils, schools and public libraries. Additional copies were available from Alberta Education. The original distribution of 90,000 copies was supplemented by an additional 60,000 copies in mid-October. The discussion paper and workbook also were placed on the Alberta Education Internet home page.

In total, the Task Force received and analyzed 8,986 responses to the workbook and 911 written submissions. In addition, a number of petitions were received, signed by 2,896 people. A summary of the responses we received is available from Alberta Education.

Holding public hearings

Eleven days of public hearings were held in eight locations across the province. These meetings were announced in the workbook and advertised in the local communities. 288 presentations were made to the Task Force at these public hearings. A list of the locations and dates of public hearings and the individuals and organizations who made presentations is included in an appendix to this report.

Meeting with education organizations

The Task Force met with ten organizations directly involved with public and private education.

Commissioning research

The Task Force asked the Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta to survey funded private schools and help provide answers to questions such as: what admission restrictions do funded private schools have, how do they handle expulsion of students, what is the level of tuition fees they charge, and how much of their budget is spent on student instruction vs. other costs.

The objective of this study was to provide the Task Force with a solid base of information to work from and a more accurate picture of funded private school policies. The report of the Population Research Laboratory, entitled *Private Schools Funding Survey Results*, is also available by contacting Alberta Education. Throughout this report, we have included information taken specifically from the research study.

Reviewing reports, studies and background information

Task Force members reviewed extensive information provided by Alberta Education and others in an attempt to get a complete and thorough understanding of the current situation and the issues involved. This included legal opinions, studies from other provinces, and historical records relating to private schools and government policy decisions. A bibliography of information reviewed by the Task Force is attached to this report.

All of the advice and information we received has been carefully reviewed and considered by Task Force members. In the end, however, no amount of study or research can produce simple answers to all the questions involved. And it's not a matter of simply choosing one group's opinions over another. There are no expert views that provide the answers. It comes to a matter of judgment. The recommendations outlined in this report reflect our best judgment about the balance we need to strike and the funding framework we believe will achieve that balance.

The issues - what we heard and learned from Albertans

As background to the Task Force's recommendations, it is important to take a careful look at the various issues involved, the facts, and the various views and opinions expressed to the Task Force over the course of this review. The following sections outline the key issues and provide an overview of both the current situation and what we heard from Albertans. Throughout the Task Force's report, whenever a reference is made to "public schools" or "public school boards", this includes both public and separate schools, as well as charter schools.

Throughout this section, we make reference to the views expressed by the thousands of Albertans who responded to the workbook or made submissions. It is important to note that, because the workbook was not intended as a scientific survey of Albertans' views, we have made no attempt to quantify or do a detailed statistical analysis of the workbook results. The purpose of the workbook was not to "count the votes" but to provide a simple vehicle for Albertans to use in providing their advice to the Task Force. Task Force members have carefully reviewed the responses and considered those views as part of the advice that helped shape our recommendations. People who are interested in reviewing the full summary of the views expressed through the workbooks, submissions and letters can contact Alberta Education for a copy of the summary.

Throughout the review process, members of the Task Force found that opinions on special education private schools were very different from opinions on other types of funded private schools. For this reason, issues related to special education private schools are treated as a separate category.

Legislation and rights

Key questions

- What legislation governs private schools?
- What are the rights of parents under existing legislation?
- Does existing legislation provide parents with a right to any public funding if they decide to send their child to a private school?
- Do parents who send their children to private schools and pay education property taxes have a right to a portion of those property taxes to educate their children?
- Is the right of choice without funding a right at all?

The way it is now

Currently, funded private schools are governed by the School Act and regulations which go along with that legislation. The School Act provides parents with a right to make choices about the education of their children, including the right to choose a funded private school.

While many presentations to the Task Force talked about “rights” of parents, in fact, the legal rights of parents are limited to those set out in the School Act. Questions raised about why certain rights have been extended to Roman Catholic parents but not to other parents clearly are outside the mandate of the Task Force. Certain constitutional guarantees were provided at the time Alberta became a province. Those guarantees are embedded in the Alberta Act and give the religious minority, either Roman Catholic or Protestant, the right to establish separate school districts. These rights are not extended to other faith groups.

Current legislation provides no “right” to funding for private schools or to a portion of property taxes paid to support education. The provincial government has made a policy decision to provide some public funds from the general revenues of the province to support private schools which meet all the requirements for accreditation. Under the School Act, private schools are not entitled to any portion of education property taxes. Therefore, in Alberta, accredited private schools are eligible for some public funding only on the basis of government policy, not because of any rights or entitlements to funding provided through other legislation.

Views and opinions

Views presented to the Task Force indicate that there is considerable confusion over the issue of what rights parents have. And this probably reflects a more widespread misunderstanding in our society about the difference between legislated rights and perceived rights.

We frequently heard comments like, “We pay taxes, therefore we have a right to public funding even if we send our children to private schools.” As noted above, paying property or provincial taxes does not mean people have rights to public funding or specific services.

Questions also were raised about why Catholic parents have a right to educate their children in a Catholic setting with full public funding while Protestant parents do not. As noted above, this issue is outside the mandate of the Task Force and relates to guarantees provided in legislation when Alberta became a province.

In presentations, a question was also raised about whether private schools have access to land or buildings held by municipalities for education purposes. Under current legislation, land dedicated by municipalities for public purposes such as public schools must be used for that purpose and therefore private schools do not have access to this land. They can lease space from public school boards.

Choice and its implications

- Key questions***
- Who chooses to send their children to funded private schools and why?
 - How many children are attending funded private schools and are the numbers increasing or decreasing?
 - To what extent is this primarily an issue involving religion-based private schools?
 - Do funded private schools provide a public good? Does this entitle them to receive public funding?
 - Do funded private schools promote segregation of views and intolerance?
 - Has the ability of parents to choose funded private schools had an impact on the overall educational system? The quality of public schools? Or the range of choices available in the public system?
 - Are private schools in rural Alberta threatening the health and vitality of public schools by fragmenting an already small base of students?

The way it is now Currently, there is little information available about parents in Alberta who choose to send their children to private schools. Presentations to the Task Force, letters, and submissions from private school supporters indicate that parents make this choice for a wide variety of reasons. Some choose private schools because of the philosophy, teaching methods, or religious basis of the school. Some say private schools teach the values they want for their children, have more individualized learning and smaller classes, or meet the

particular needs of their children. Meeting the needs of children is the main reason parents of children with special needs send their children to special education private schools. Survey information provided by private school organizations suggests that parents of children in private schools have a range of family incomes and send their children to private schools for a variety of reasons.

Enrolment trends from 1986/87 to 1996/97 show a steady increase in the number of students attending private schools, from 13,275 to 20,327. In the same time period, public school enrolment increased from 423,372 to 489,352, an increase of almost 66,000 students. Of the roughly 20,000 students in private schools, just over 15,000 are attending funded private schools. About 14,000 of those students, including about 700 students attending special education private schools, are eligible for funding. About 1,000 students attending funded private schools are not eligible for funding because they are adults or they are students whose parents are not Alberta residents. The remaining 5,000 students are in accredited, but not funded, private schools, in registered private schools, home education or other arrangements.

On the issue of whether or not this is primarily an issue involving religion-based private schools, information available to the Task Force shows that, in 1996-97, 94 of the 152 funded private schools were religion-based.

The Task Force is not aware of any Alberta studies which have addressed the impact of private schools on the public system.

Views and opinions There are conflicting views about the nature of private schools in Alberta and the implications of providing parents with the right to choose a private education for their children.

While most will at least pay lip service to the right of parents to choose private schools, some others, we suspect, would prefer that this choice simply not be available. They fundamentally object to private schools. These people view private schools as elitist, catering to only a small segment of the population. They see private schools as a way of segregating children and promoting intolerance. They question the quality of education children in private schools receive. And they certainly do not support any public funds going to support a choice some parents have made.

On the other hand, private school supporters argue with strong conviction that their schools reflect the diversity of Alberta society, and by their very nature, are a reflection of the tolerance and understanding Albertans want to foster and support. They argue that different perspectives are reflected in

private schools. Their students are taught to tolerate the views of others even though they may disagree. They argue that the right to choose a private education is fundamental and should not be compromised by the parents' ability to pay. Unlike the traditional stereotype, private school supporters say that the majority of their parents do not in fact have high incomes, and have to struggle each year to meet the tuition requirements.

Some have argued that the existence of private schools is essential to keep public education "on its toes". Some suggest that, by providing competition, private schools encourage public schools to consider alternative programs and respond to parents' and students' needs. There is some evidence that the public school system in certain parts of the province is responding to the expectations of parents for more choice and flexibility; however, there is no evidence to suggest that this is because of "competition" from private schools.

Others made the case to the Task Force that private schools provide a "public good" in much the same way as public schools. Many suggested that, if we consider the education of children to be a public good, and most would agree, then it should make no difference if that education is provided in the public or a private school. Supporters of this view go on to say that meeting a public good should be the basis for public funding - funding which should be provided on the same basis whether it's to a public or a private school.

On the issue of fragmentation of the public system, the Task Force heard very real concerns from people in rural Alberta who fear an expansion of private schools could threaten the viability of some of their schools. In communities where there are barely enough students to support one school, a new private school could divide the student population, making it difficult for the public school to survive. Fragmentation was also an issue in larger communities where we heard concerns that private schools could skim off some of the best and brightest students, leaving the public system to deal with all the rest of the students. Some expressed the view that this could erode the quality of the public system, create a "second best" or two-tier system, and the public system would lose out.

Accessibility

Key questions

- If private schools receive public funding, should they be able to select their students and choose to serve some and not others?
- What are the current policies for private schools, alternative schools and charter schools in relation to selecting students?
- Is a requirement for parents to support the particular religious beliefs of the private school a bar to eligibility?
- To what extent do private schools accept or not accept students with special needs?

The way it is now

Research conducted for the Task Force shows that admission requirements for private schools vary widely, ranging from universal admission with no restrictions to restricted admission on the basis of whether parents belong to a specific religious congregation.

Of the private schools included in the survey, roughly a third provide universal or near universal access, a third have some restrictions based on screening or philosophical grounds, and the remaining third restrict enrolment to those belonging to a specific religious faith.

In comparison, both charter schools and alternative programs within the public school system are required to accept any student provided there is room in the program. Both charter schools and alternative programs primarily attract students who either have the particular skills or interests involved (e.g. academics, arts or sports) or whose parents support the particular educational orientation of the school.

Further information on admission and selection policies is included in the report on *Private Schools Funding Survey Results*.

Views and opinions

Clearly, the issue of the ability of private schools to select students is a point of contention. Most public school supporters, including school boards, superintendents and teachers organizations, make a strong case that public schools are required to educate all students while private schools are “free to pick and choose.” (Alberta School Boards Association)

On the other hand, supporters of private schools argue that their enrolment policies are similar to those of alternative programs and charter schools, both of which receive full instructional funding. They serve all students who wish to attend their schools. In the case of religion-based private schools, there is an expectation that parents agree with the tenets of the

“The public school system accepts every child, not because the law says it must, but because the public school system is founded on the conviction that accepting every child is the best basis for the education of every child.”

Public School Boards’
Association of Alberta

particular religion involved. While private school supporters recognize some short-comings when it comes to children with special education needs, they say they do not often turn these children away but are open with parents about the programs they are able to provide. Many say they do provide special needs programs, even if it means increased tuition costs for all their parents.

From responses to workbooks, submissions and presentations, we have learned that opinion is divided on whether accredited private schools should be able to select which students attend their schools.

The majority of people who support funding for private schools feel that private schools should be able to select students and that instructional funding should not be less for private schools than for public schools because they are able to select students. On the other hand, the majority of those who oppose private school funding disagree. They say that private schools should not be able to select students, whether or not they receive public funding. They also feel that private schools should receive less funding than public schools because they are not required to accept all students.

Accountability

Key questions

- What are the differences in accountability for public and accredited private school operators?
- Is the current situation in which accredited private schools are accountable to parents and the province adequate to ensure appropriate accountability?
- Are private schools less accountable because they do not have elected school boards?
- Should accredited private schools be required to meet the same accountability standards as public schools, including the requirement for school councils and the ability of parents to appeal decisions made by private school operators and request the Minister of Education to review certain decisions about the education of their children?

The way it is now

There are more similarities than differences in terms of accountability requirements for public schools and accredited private schools. With public schools, the school board is accountable for the school system’s compliance with provincial legislation, regulations and policies. School boards are accountable to both their electorate and to the Minister of Education. Students must write provincial achievement tests and diploma exams, if they are taking diploma examination courses. Decisions to close schools

must be made by school boards in consultation with the community and alternative arrangements must be made for students affected by the closure. Effective September 1, 1998, public school boards and charter schools will be included under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

For funded private schools, the school's operator is accountable for the school's compliance with provincial legislation, regulations and policies. Funded private school operators are accountable to both the parents they serve and the Minister of Education. Students must write provincial achievement tests and diploma exams, if they are taking diploma examination courses. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act does not apply. Funded private schools are required to provide regular reports to the Minister and the information they provide is then publicly available. Currently, there are no provisions that apply to the closure of funded private schools and, if private schools choose to expel a student or close a school, they are not responsible for providing alternative arrangements for the students involved.

Public schools are required to have school councils and parents have the right to appeal decisions that significantly affect their child's education program. Further, they may ask the Minister of Education to review certain decisions including placement of students in special education programs, expulsions, access to francophone programs and fees. This is not the case for funded private schools. In many cases, funded private schools are operated by groups of parents or parents may serve directly on the board for the society which operates the school.

Both public school boards and funded private schools are required to provide annual reports, audited financial statements, and education plans to the Minister of Education.

Views and opinions

Both public and private school supporters view accountability as an important issue.

Public school supporters argue that they have more requirements placed on them than do private schools. They also argue that locally elected school boards provide a greater degree of accountability not just to parents but to the community as a whole.

Private school supporters argue that they are directly accountable to the parents of students in their schools and meet many of the same requirements as public schools. Representatives of accredited private schools expressed a willingness to hear appeals from parents and have their

decisions reviewed by the Minister in a manner similar to public schools, provided that the integrity of the school's mission was not threatened. They also supported changes to regulations to protect against school closures before the end of the school year. In relation to the province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation, private school supporters argue that they are indirectly included in the legislation. They must provide information and reports to the Minister of Education and that information then becomes public information.

The Task Force also heard some concerns about conflict of interest. For public schools, rules designed to prevent conflicts of interest for school board members are set out in the School Act. These same rules do not apply to funded private schools. Some concerns were expressed about private schools run by families in which members of the board operating the school are related to the principal and possibly teachers at the school as well. This makes it difficult for parents to have an independent avenue of appeal. On the other hand, others said that it would be very difficult to apply the same conflict of interest provisions to funded private schools because of the small size of the schools or the fact they are often operated by an individual or a family.

From the responses to workbooks, submissions and presentations, many people agreed that the current situation in which accredited private schools are accountable to both parents and the Minister of Education is adequate to ensure appropriate accountability. This view was strongly supported by those who support funding for private schools. Those who oppose funding for private schools disagree. Most of those who oppose private school funding said that having locally elected school boards makes public schools more accountable while most of those who support private school funding disagreed with this view.

On the question of whether parents of students in private schools should have the same rights of appeal as parents of children in public schools, the majority of respondents said that they should.

Education requirements

- Key questions*
- Should accredited private schools be required to meet the same standards as public schools?
 - Should adherence to Alberta curriculum requirements be a requirement for public funding?

The way it is now

Accredited private schools meet many of the same education requirements as public schools. They follow the Alberta Program of Studies or are able to use an alternative program, provided it meets the broader Goals of Education and the general objectives of the Alberta Program of Studies. Their students must write provincial achievement tests and diploma exams, if they are taking diploma examination courses. Generally, students in accredited private schools do as well as students in public schools on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams. At the high school level, if private schools are not offering regular high school diploma examination courses, their students are not required to write diploma exams. These students are not eligible to receive an Alberta high school diploma.

Views and opinions

The Task Force heard many people say that if private schools receive public funding, they should meet all the same education requirements as public schools. That includes meeting the same standards and providing a quality education to their students. The Task Force also heard some concerns about the quality of education provided through an alternative curriculum offered in some private schools and about the lack of on-site monitoring from Alberta Education. Concerns also were expressed about the fact that students can complete a high school education in an accredited private school but not be eligible for an Alberta high school diploma or certificate of achievement because they have not met the requirements.

In terms of the quality of education provided in private schools, private school supporters indicate that their students regularly meet or exceed provincial standards as measured by achievement tests. They are monitored by staff of Alberta Education and any problems result in more careful reviews of the schools involved.

From the responses to workbooks, submissions and presentations, the majority said that, if accredited private schools receive public funds, they should be required to meet the same standards as public schools. This view was strongly supported both by those who are in favour of funding for private schools and those who are not.

Tuition fees

Key questions

- How much are tuition fees in private schools?
- If parents choose private schools, should they expect to pay all the costs or a portion of the costs involved?
- Should the amount of tuition fees charged by accredited private schools be regulated in any way?

- Should the amount of public funding provided to private schools be tied to or restricted by the tuition fees they charge?
- Should private schools receive public funding and still be able to charge tuition fees?

The way it is now

Research undertaken for the Task Force shows that tuition fees charged by private schools range from a low of less than \$1,000 per year to over \$6,000 per year. In 1995, just over half the parents paid between \$2,000 and \$4,000 tuition each year. Just under 25 percent of parents pay less than \$2,000 in tuition fees and almost 23 percent pay more than \$4,000. Most private schools provide special arrangements for families with more than one child and many offer a subsidy program for parents who are unable to pay.

There currently are no regulations governing the amount of tuition fees private schools can charge. Public schools are not allowed to charge tuition fees.

More detailed information on tuition fees at private schools is included in the report *Private Schools Funding Survey Results*.

Views and opinions

The Task Force heard from many people who said that tuition fees were a substantial burden for parents of children in private schools. Contrary to the stereotypes, supporters of private schools indicated that the majority of parents who send their children to private schools in Alberta are not higher income parents wanting an elite education for their children. Many struggle every year to pay tuition so their children can attend private schools. Some presenters suggested they would welcome a cap on tuition fees at private schools.

“All those who imply or scream that we are wealthy elitist snobs have not understood the financial facts.”

Christian Schools

International District 11

On the other hand, the Task Force also heard that private schools have an advantage because they can charge tuition fees. Some suggested that provincial funding for private schools should be conditional on a limit being placed on tuition fees that can be charged by private schools.

Responses to workbooks, submissions and presentations show that opinions were divided on tuition fee issues. Respondents strongly supported the idea of parents paying for choices outside the public education system, but were divided on the amount. Many said that parents should assume responsibility for the full costs while others said that any cost to parents acts as a barrier to choice of education programs. Some said that tuition fees are too high now and don't allow low income parents to make the choice to send their children to private schools.

“Clearly, without a statutory limit on tuition fees, private schools can take whatever the province will provide and then charge whatever tuition fee they wish: the result is that public funds could be used to give private schools a significant financial advantage over public schools.”

Public School Boards’
Association of Alberta

Many respondents concluded that, by charging tuition fees, private schools could have an unfair advantage over public schools. On the other hand, many also pointed out that tuition fees are likely to remain relatively low, since most parents sending their children to funded private schools are middle or low income earners. This means it would be unlikely that tuition fees could provide an unfair advantage.

Most supporters of funding for private schools said that charging tuition fees does not provide an unfair advantage, but their opinions were more divided on whether there should be limits on tuition fees. Those who disagree with funding for private schools often said that tuition fees provide an unfair advantage to private schools.

On the issue of whether or not limits should be placed on how much tuition fees private schools can charge, opinions were divided. One group would welcome limits on tuition, especially if that meant private schools would be more affordable. Others said there should be no government regulation and the marketplace would set natural limits based on what people were willing to pay. Some respondents cautioned that, without limits on tuition, Alberta will see the development of a two-tier education system with a few schools for children of the wealthy and many schools for the rest of society.

Alternative funding frameworks

Accredited private schools

Key questions

- Should accredited private schools receive public funding?
- Is additional funding for private schools a threat to the public education system? Will it encourage more parents to choose to send their children to private schools?
- Should all children receive equal education funding regardless of whether they attend public schools or accredited private schools?
- Should the level of provincial funding be increased, decreased or remain about the same?
- Should the funding for private schools be expressed as a percentage of instructional funding provided to public schools?
- Should private schools receive the full instructional funding provided to public schools, including funds coming from education property taxes?
- Should the government commit to a secure funding arrangement which provides private school supporters with the assurance of a defined level of funding now and for the future?
- What criteria should be put in place to determine eligibility for public funding?

- Does funding private schools create a two tier education system, or do we have one already?

The way it is now

Funded private schools receive per student grants from the general revenues of the province to support the instruction of students but are not entitled to either support funding (for transportation, administration, operation and maintenance of schools) or capital funding (for building new schools or renovating existing ones). They also are not entitled to a portion of education property taxes collected by the province.

Some background information on how funding arrangements for private schools have changed over the years was included in the Task Force's background paper, *Setting the Stage for Discussions*. The original motion in the legislature in 1966 advocated the principle that every child in Alberta should be assured an equal opportunity for education regardless of financial circumstances or place of residence. The motion urged the government "to consider means of extending a measure of financial assistance to private schools teaching the Alberta curriculum." The motion was approved and funding has been provided to private schools. However, a review of the various reports, legislation and studies involving private schools shows that the rationale for the particular funding arrangements has not been clearly set out.

Before 1994-95, private school funding was set as a percentage of the per student provincial grant to public schools. With changes made in 1994-95 in how education was funded, private school funding no longer is set as a percentage of per student grants to public schools. Instead, a rate of funding per student was set. That amount increases or decreases each year by the same percentage as increases or decreases in the basic instruction grant for public schools.

Effective September 1, 1997, the per student rate for private schools was set at \$1815. Announcements made in January prior to the Task Force's recommendations indicate that rates for private school funding will increase to \$1902 for the 1998-99 school year, \$1921 for 1999-2000, and \$1940 for 2000-01. Basic instruction grants for public schools will increase from \$3686 for 1997-98 to \$3860 for 1998-99, \$3899 for 1999-2000, and \$3937 for 2000-01.

Views and opinions

The Task Force heard the full range of opinions from those who felt strongly that private schools should receive no public funding whatsoever to those who argued with equal conviction that private schools should receive all the same funding as public schools.

A review of responses to the Task Force workbook as well as submissions and presentations shows that opinion is divided on whether or not private schools should receive public funding. The majority of respondents to the workbook agreed that accredited private schools should be funded, although a significant number of respondents disagreed. Opinion also was divided on whether or not providing public funds to private schools is important to ensure that parents have choices in the education their children receive. Views were split on whether or not providing funds to private schools takes away from the public system. And a majority felt that, if parents want choices outside the public system, they should be prepared to pay for them.

In terms of how private schools should be funded, most said that private schools should receive funding for instruction but not for administration, transportation, operations and maintenance of facilities or for construction or renovation of schools. Opinion was divided on whether or not accredited private schools should receive a portion of education property taxes.

Most supporters of private school funding said that current funding was too low and should be increased. Most of them also said that private schools should receive a portion of education property taxes. They strongly supported funding for instruction, were more divided on funding for administration and other support functions, and there was little support for funding for school capital. Supporters of private school funding were divided on whether or not funding should be based on a proportion of funding provided to public schools.

Those who oppose funding for private schools said that current funding was too much. Because they oppose funding for private schools, they also do not agree that funding for private schools should be based on a proportion of funding provided to public schools. Most of them disagreed with funding for instruction and strongly disagreed with funding for support functions or for school capital. They also opposed providing accredited private schools with a portion of education property taxes.

For the record, we heard the following positions from education organizations:

- The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes public funding of private schools and urged the Task Force to recommend that all funding for private schools should be terminated.
- The Alberta School Boards Association believes that public funding for private schools should not be increased.
- The Public School Boards' Association opposes any additional funding

for private schools and wants private schools to meet all the same conditions as public schools in order to be eligible for funding.

- The College of Alberta School Superintendents advocates phasing out public financial support for private schools over a period of time.
- The Alberta Home and School Councils' Association believes that the present limit on public funding for private schools should not be exceeded.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta suggested that grants should be tied not just to the number of students served but also to measures of performance. Funding approaches should have few obstacles that separate private schools from public or charter schools.
- The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA) wants private schools to receive the same instructional grants as public schools - in effect, the instructional grant should follow the student to any properly approved school. Private schools should not be eligible for support grants for transportation, administration or operation of schools, or for capital grants.
- Christian Schools International District 11 supports the position of AISCA.
- Alberta's Seventh-day Adventist Schools suggest that full instructional funding should follow the child whether the child is in a public or private school.
- The Association of Christian Schools International, Western Canada, also supports full instructional funding for accredited private schools.

"...I'd like to point out that my kids are just kids. They, too, are getting a good education and will one day benefit the public with their services; mine will have received \$1830 [sic] a year to be instructed while others received \$3686. Maybe someday people will understand that children aren't public or private ... they are all children."

G. Knelson, Secretary, High Level Christian Education Society

There were few specific suggestions for a new funding framework. The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta outlined a number of specific requirements that should be included in a funding framework including equitable access to education funding, a requirement that private school policies must follow the principles of natural justice, maintenance of existing accountability arrangements, new regulations for handling school closures, fair and appropriate enrolment policies, and appeals to the Minister under certain conditions. Overall, their call was for the Task Force to "make it right", to set a new funding framework based on clear policies and to provide certainty for the future.

Most public school organizations, on the other hand, said that there should be no increases in funding to private schools, regardless of the criteria or framework involved. In general terms, their view was that any additional funding to private schools would take away from the public system, either directly, by having less money available to the public system, or indirectly, by providing an incentive for more parents to choose a private education for their children. Some suggested that funding should be phased out or eliminated entirely. Others suggested that if public funding is available, private schools should be required to meet all the same conditions as public

schools. This would include a completely open membership on boards or societies operating private schools, a guarantee that every child would be admitted, a responsibility to provide alternative arrangements for students who are expelled, appeal processes the same as in public schools, establishment of school councils, approval by the Minister of the hiring of a Chief Executive Officer, conditions for the management and operations of societies, as well as a number of other specific conditions required of public school operators.

On the issue of whether or not private schools should have access to education property taxes, private school supporters argued that they pay taxes like all other parents, but their children do not get the benefit of those tax dollars. In their view, this is unfair. On the other hand, public school supporters say that education property taxes are paid by all Albertans regardless of whether they have children in school. That's because all society benefits from the public education system and from the opportunity for all children to get a first-class education. When parents make a choice to send their children to private schools, there is a cost associated with that choice. In their view, that is fair.

The Task Force heard many arguments in support of “equal treatment” primarily from private school supporters. Their view is that if public funding is provided to support a child's education following the basic curriculum, funding should be equal regardless of whether the child attends a public or a private school.

We should be clear that most who advocated “equal treatment” did not suggest that private schools should receive all the same funding as public schools. Most acknowledged that support funding and capital funding should be restricted to public schools. Their case for equality in funding centred primarily around equal instructional funding.

Special education private schools

Key questions

- Are special needs students entitled under the School Act to access an appropriate learning program?
- Who should determine whether a child has special education needs?
- Who should decide if a child with special education needs should be placed in a public school or in a special education private school?
- Are there better alternatives to the current process for appeals in cases where school boards and parents disagree about the placement of a child in a special education program in a public school or in a special education private school?

- Does the current funding system put school boards in a conflict of interest in negotiating both placements for students and specific funding arrangements with special education private schools?
- Do the current funding, placement, and appeal processes serve the best interests of the child?
- Should private schools which exclusively serve special education students be recognized as a unique category for funding and other purposes?
- What alternatives are there to the current framework for funding special education private schools? What is an appropriate level of funding?
- Should special education private schools have to receive their funding through public school boards? Could funding be provided directly to special education private schools in cases where the board and parents agree on the placement or an independent process has determined that placement should be in a special education private school?
- Should funding for special education private schools recognize the total costs of educating these children?
- Should funding for special education private schools reflect the fact that, unlike public schools, special education private schools have a 100 percent incidence rate and therefore cannot benefit from any pooling of funds?

The way it is now

The Minister of Education has identified ten special education private schools in the province that serve only students with special needs. All of their students have mild, moderate or severe special needs and the schools must modify their education programs to meet these students' special needs. These schools serve about 700 students while estimates are that about 50,000 children with special education needs are served in public schools. In addition, some children with special education needs are served in accredited private schools.

The ten special education private schools are eligible for public funding in three different ways.

- If a parent chooses to place a child in one of these schools and does not have an agreement with the public school board, Alberta Education provides the school with approximately \$1815 for a child with mild or moderate needs. The amount increases by \$8910 if the child has severe special needs.
- If a public school board has an appropriate program for the child in one of its schools, but an agreement is reached with the parent to send the child to a special education private school, the school board can transfer the per student money it receives to the private school, less the amount

it receives for the administration of its schools. In Calgary, for example, this works out to about \$4400 for a child with mild or moderate special needs and about \$13,200 for a child with severe special needs.

- If a public school board does not have an appropriate program and directs a child to attend a special education private school, the public school board will pay all the program costs for the child.

Early in January 1998, changes to funding for special education were announced by the Minister of Education. Those changes will increase the amount of additional funding available for children with severe physical and mental disabilities from \$8,910 to \$11,600. This increase recognizes the fact that costs for educating these students are high and it also better reflects the costs of the service provided. Funding for children with severe behavioural needs has been maintained at the current level of \$8,910. Funding available for students with mild and moderate learning disabilities has been increased and school boards are required to report on how those funds are used to address the needs of these students.

Views and opinions

It was clear to the Task Force that most people see special education private schools as a separate category from other types of private schools. Parents do not “choose” to send their children to special education private schools in the same way as other parents may choose a private school. The common element is that parents are seeking to meet the educational and other needs of their children.

We heard about long delays for children to be accepted into some of the special education private schools. We also heard about the frustration and anxiety of some parents in dealing with the public education system and trying to get access to programs they feel are best for their children. As the Foothills Academy in Calgary puts it, “As a private charity we are able to advocate for these children and families in a public system that is fraught with bureaucracy, professional jargon, trendy pedagogy and perceived lack of tolerance for students who do not ‘fit the mold’.”

Supporters of special education private schools indicated that funding was not sufficient to cover the high costs of educating children with severe learning disabilities. Some estimate those costs to be in the order of \$14,500 per student per year. The Task Force heard calls for government to fund both public schools and special education private schools at a rate that reflects the actual cost of educating these children. Concerns also were expressed about the fact that the majority of funding for special education private schools must come through school boards and that funding is

available only if the school board agrees with the placement of particular children in the special education private school. This process often places parents and the school boards in an adversarial situation.

“Government designated special needs schools ... are often the last and only resort for desperate parents of children with severe learning disabilities. We were guided to them by professionals in both the public systems and medical professions, often after years of humiliating failure for our children. We didn’t choose these schools for elitist education purposes. Our children were sinking and this was the last raft out. We are public education supporters but our children need special education for basic survival.” Parent Advisory Committee, Foothills Academy

On the other hand, public school organizations argue that the public school system has become more responsive and today they educate many children with special needs. They say that the public education system is the first choice for most parents of children with special needs. At the same time, they acknowledge that some children with special needs are falling through the cracks and that, in some cases, the programs they are able to provide fall short of the expectations of parents and the needs of the children involved. In their view, this is not as a result of any lack of commitment but strictly as a result of inadequate funding for children with special needs within the public system.

We heard that in order for learning disabled students to have equitable educational opportunities, they need equitable funding - to both public and private schools. Parents argue that, in some special education private schools, less than 20 percent of the children are receiving full funding through transfers from the various school boards. They also point to the large financial burden of parents. In the words of some parents, “Partial funding of children with severe learning disabilities creates a major financial stress for parents who are already pushed to the limit in dealing with their child’s emotional and academic success.”

The Task Force heard concerns about the appeal process, particularly concerns that it is a long and arduous process that pits parents against school boards. The Task Force heard suggestions that the process should be streamlined and other alternatives such as mediation or arbitration should be considered.

The strong support for special education private schools was echoed in the views expressed through workbooks, submissions and presentations. The majority of people said that parents should be able to decide whether to send their child to a public school or an accredited private school. They also said that there should be no difference in funding whether a child with special needs is in a public school or an accredited private school if there is no appropriate program in the public school.

Other issues

In addition to these primary issues, the Task Force also heard from Albertans on a number of additional issues, some of which are outside of the mandate of the Task Force.

While the purpose of the Task Force's work is not to discuss funding for public schools or to comment on whether or not current funding is appropriate, we frequently heard concerns about funding levels for the public education system. Repeatedly, we heard the view that public schools are under funded and government should not consider any increase in funding to private schools until public schools are adequately funded. Many suggested that when dollars are scarce, first priority should go to public schools because they must be there to serve all students and public education is the cornerstone of Alberta's education system. Those who suggested increases in funding for private schools were careful to add that additional funding should not come from the existing pool of money available for education but should be "new" funding from the general revenues of the province.

We also heard concerns that some school boards have not been responsive to parents who are looking for choices, flexibility or alternatives within the public system. For some parents, they see their only choice as private schools.

Over the years, many public school boards have provided alternative programs within a public school setting. As examples, the Edmonton Public School Board provides alternative programs emphasizing a language, culture, religion, subject area, or teaching philosophy. The Wild Rose School Division operates a Christian alternative school in Drayton Valley. For 20 years, the Pembina Hills School Division has operated Neerlandia School, a school which teaches the Alberta curriculum from a Christian perspective. On the other hand, there are some school boards which provide relatively few alternative programs for parents and the Task Force is aware of one example where, as a matter of policy, the school board will not provide alternative programs which are culture or religion based.

The Task Force also heard specific concerns about barriers to hiring teachers for alternative religion-based schools, questions about whether teachers in private schools should be full members of the ATA, and questions about whether there are adequate provisions for reviewing the competency of teachers in private schools.

In relation to barriers to hiring teachers in alternative programs, some school boards have had no difficulty hiring teachers for these programs. We

also understand that the majority of teachers in private schools have no interest in becoming full members of the ATA, particularly since the ATA objects to all funding for private schools. Finally, the Task Force understands that changes are being made in regulations covering the Minister of Education's responsibility to investigate complaints about unprofessional conduct for teachers who are not active members of the ATA, including those teaching in private schools.

Observations of the Task Force

Before we outline recommendations on a number of issues raised in the previous section, the Task Force has a number of overall observations about what we heard and learned as part of the review process. And these observations help to put our recommendations into perspective.

First and foremost, the Task Force supports the views expressed by many Albertans that public schools are the cornerstone of Alberta's education system. Private schools provide choices for parents, meet the special needs of some children and complement the public system. But first priority must be placed on maintaining a strong public education system.

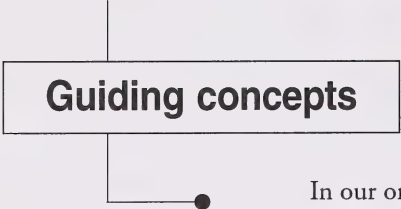
The Task Force was struck by the number of misconceptions and misunderstandings that exist about private schools. We hope that through both the original discussion paper produced by the Task Force and through this report, we have added to Albertans' understanding of the circumstances surrounding private schools in Alberta.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Albertans hold opposing and very strong views on the issue of whether or not private schools should receive public funding, and how much. This diversity of views is understandable. However, the Task Force members feel that more should be done to strive for common understanding among private and public schools. This will happen only if supporters of private and public schools discuss areas of common interest and try to accommodate diversity, rather than simply work harder to defend their own positions.

The Task Force heard a number of comments related to "rights" of parents. This approach confuses legal rights and entitlements with statements of belief. And it adds confusion to the situation when it comes to this issue. The Task Force can only comment that if parents did in fact have legislated "rights" to full funding for children in private schools, there would be no reason for the Task Force - the answers would be clear.

The Task Force believes strongly that the government has a responsibility to monitor the quality of education provided in all schools, including private schools. In public schools, this responsibility is shared with the local school board, superintendent, principals, teachers, and parents. Questions were raised about the quality of education children receive in some private schools, particularly those which do not follow the Alberta Program of Studies, and about the lack of regular on-site monitoring of the quality of education in private schools.

Finally, the members of the Task Force, although we come from different perspectives, have agreed that our primary objective must be to achieve the right balance. To balance the strongly held views of different Albertans. To balance the desires of some parents for a particular type of education with the expectations of the majority of Albertans that the primary focus must be on maintaining a strong and viable public education system. To balance the value of having choices in the education system with the financial burdens parents may have to pay for the choices they make. And most important, to ensure that the best interests of children are the paramount consideration.



Guiding concepts

In our original discussion paper, the Task Force set out the following guiding concepts:

Best interests of the student

The focus of the education system is the student. The best interests of students are the paramount consideration for all policies, decisions and actions in Alberta's education system.

Rights and responsibilities of parents

Parents have a right and the responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children.

Public education as the cornerstone

The cornerstone of education in Alberta is the publicly funded system with the clear mandate of providing educational programs for all students through its two dimensions, public schools and separate schools.

Freedom of choice

Parents are entitled to choice within the public system, including alternate programs and charter schools, the choice of a private school, or the choice of home education.

Heritage and diversity

Alberta's education system should reflect the heritage, diversity and values of Alberta society.

Special education A student who is eligible for a special education program, by virtue of the student's behavioural, communication, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics (or a combination of those characteristics) is entitled to access a special education program, once need has been established.

Funding Public schools are funded primarily through public funds and may not charge tuition fees. Private schools that are accredited by the Government of Alberta are eligible to receive some public financial support. In making choices about the education of their children, including the choice of sending their child to a private school, parents may have to make a direct financial contribution to the particular program or school.

Role of the province The province has a responsibility to set educational standards and to ensure that those standards are met in both public and private schools. The province also has the responsibility to assess and report on student achievement and performance, to provide funding to school authorities on a fair and equitable basis, to develop and implement appropriate policies and legislation, and to provide regular reports to Albertans.

By and large, these guiding concepts were supported by people who expressed their views to the Task Force, but they differed in their thinking about how they should be applied. The Task Force recommends that these guiding concepts should be adopted to guide future policy related to private schools.

Recommendations

The Task Force has carefully reviewed all the opinions, facts, and alternatives presented to us. We have debated and discussed the pros and cons of various solutions to the issues put before us, and we have used our best judgment to present the following recommendations.

At the outset, it is important for the Task Force to frame our views on private schools. As noted earlier, the Task Force strongly supports Alberta's public schools and believes that public schools are the cornerstone of our education system. We believe that private schools play an important role in Alberta society and complement our public education system. Private schools provide choices and alternatives for parents. They contribute to the public good, meet the needs of some children that cannot be met in public schools, and reflect the diversity of Alberta's heritage and values.

As outlined below, the Task Force recommends that private schools should receive a portion of the basic instruction grant provided to public schools. But to be eligible for public funding, certain conditions should be met, and those conditions should relate primarily to what students are taught and the outcomes and standards they are expected to achieve. The Task Force believes that private schools receiving public funding should be required to follow the same requirements for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies and meet the same standards as are expected of all students in the public education system. Private schools may choose not to follow the Alberta Program of Studies and to provide other choices for parents, but if they do, they should not be eligible for public funding.

As noted earlier in this report, the past rationale for providing funding to private schools has not been clear. The Task Force believes that the rationale should be tied directly to whether or not private schools follow the requirements of the Alberta Program of Studies and meet standards set by the Government of Alberta for all Alberta students. If they do so, they should be eligible to receive some public funding.

At the same time, private schools are by their very nature "private". We do not support the view that, if they receive public funding, private schools must become the same as public schools. To do so defeats the purpose of having private schools and providing this alternative to Alberta parents.

The Task Force also believes that special education private schools should be treated as a distinct and separate category of private schools. For that reason, our recommendations on special education private schools are set out separately.

Funding for accredited private schools

The Task Force recommends that:

1. Accredited private schools should continue to receive public funding if they meet prescribed conditions.
2. In principle, funding for accredited private schools should be tied to the funding provided to public schools for instruction of students.
3. Funding for accredited private schools should be set as a percentage of the basic instruction grant provided to public schools. The grant should increase or decrease at the same rate as increases or decreases in the public system.
4. Funded private schools should receive 60 percent of the basic instruction grant provided to public schools. To be eligible for funding, private schools should be required to follow the same requirements for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies as public schools, achieve the same educational standards as public schools, and meet other conditions as recommended by the Task Force.
5. Funded private schools should not be eligible for
 - support funding to cover costs of transportation, administration, or operation and maintenance of schools
 - capital funding to build new schools or renovate existing ones
 - a portion of education property taxes.
6. If special funding is provided to public schools for implementing changes or other initiatives related to the Alberta Program of Studies, the Minister of Education should consider extending that special funding to funded private schools in the same proportion as the basic instruction grant.

Comments

Members of the Task Force listened carefully to the wide variety of opinions put forward on whether or not accredited private schools should receive public funding, how much they should receive, and how that funding should be determined.

Members of the Task Force understand the case strongly put forward by supporters of private schools to move to 100 percent of the basic instruction grant. The Task Force also has been impressed with the support we heard for the public system. Albertans feel strongly that the public

system is the cornerstone of Alberta's education system and that everything possible should be done to make sure the public system provides children with an excellent education.

Balancing views on both sides of this issue, the Task Force feels that accredited private schools should continue to receive some public funding, but not the full amount provided to public schools.

The basic principle we have agreed to is that funding in private schools should support the education of Alberta students. As noted above, we believe that private schools should be required to follow the same requirements for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies as public schools, ensuring that students in funded private schools are taught the same content and achieve the same standards as students in public schools. That is the public good involved and that is what public funds should support. Tying grants to private schools to the level of basic instruction grants paid to public schools provides a logical approach to setting funding for accredited private schools. It also ensures that grants to public and private schools will go up or down in the same proportion.

In terms of setting the specific percentage number, there is no simple rationale for selecting one percentage over another. It is a judgment call based on a number of considerations, most important of which is to strike a balance. On the one end of the continuum, some say that private schools should receive the same instructional funding as public schools. The Task Force does not agree, primarily because accredited private schools have the ability to select students and they can charge tuition fees. These two elements are fundamental to their nature as private, not public, schools. We also agree, as do most Albertans, that parents choose to send their children to private schools and should have a responsibility for at least some of the costs associated with making that choice.

On the other hand, some say that private schools should receive no public funding. We also disagree with this view. We believe that accredited private schools should be eligible for public funding provided that certain conditions and standards are met and the quality of education children receive in private schools is satisfactory.

The Task Force believes that 60 percent of the basic instruction grant is an appropriate balance. It is a significant proportion of the funding provided to public schools, although it is less than 50 percent of the total per student funding public schools receive. It reflects our view that public schools must be the first priority for government funding but also recognizes the public good provided by accredited private schools and the importance of providing choices for parents.

The Task Force also understands that, from time to time, special funding is provided by the government to public schools to support changes or new initiatives related to the Alberta Program of Studies. For example, additional funding has been provided to public schools to support the integration of technology. We recommend that, in future, the Minister consider extending at least 60 percent of special grants directly related to the Alberta Program of Studies to funded private schools.

We do not support providing funding to private schools for transportation, administration or operation of schools or for building or renovating schools. We also do not recommend any changes to current legislation which limits education property taxes to the public system. In our view, funding for private schools should be tied directly to the education of students and to the basic instruction grant provided to public schools.

The Task Force estimates the additional cost of its recommendations to government to be approximately \$6.7 million for the 1998-99 school year on top of the funding increases already announced by the government. This estimate is based on current enrolments in funded private schools and also takes into account recommended changes in funding for special education private schools outlined on subsequent pages of our report.

Estimated Costs of Task Force Recommendations

School Year	Funding level	Number of students	Sub-totals	Total funding
September 1997	\$1,815	14,668		\$26,622,420
September 1998 Current Plan	\$1,902	14,961		\$28,455,822
September 1998 Task Force Recommendation	\$2,316 (60% of \$3860, public school per student basic instruction grant) Special education private schools	14,961*	\$34,649,676 \$502,652**	
Total costs			\$35,152,328	\$35,152,328
Estimated additional costs***				\$6,696,506

* This includes students currently attending non-credit programs in funded private schools. If these private schools choose not to follow the Alberta Program of Studies, their students no longer would be eligible for funding and the total number of students and the total costs would be decreased accordingly.

** This is an estimated adjustment which reflects the Task Force's recommendations that equivalent funding should be provided for students with special education needs whether they attend a public school or a special education private school. This does not include any adjustments the Minister of Education may choose to make on an annual basis pursuant to the Task Force's recommendation 25.

*** Estimated cost of recommendations based on 1996/1997 enrolment data.

Access to accredited private schools

The Task Force recommends that:

7. **Private schools should continue to have the right to select students.**
8. **If a student is expelled from a funded private school, the school should continue to be responsible for that child's education for the remainder of the school year.**
9. **No changes should be made to the current practice in which parents of children in private schools do not have the same rights as public school parents to appeal decisions about their children's education.**

Comments The recommendations of the Task Force stem from the basic belief that accredited private schools are private. The ability to select their own students is fundamental to the nature of private schools. For the same reason, with the exception of special education private schools, we do not think it is appropriate to establish appeal processes for private schools or to involve the Minister of Education in requests from parents to review decisions about the education of children in private schools.

At the same time, we do feel that, once a funded private school accepts a student and receives funding for that student, they have a “contract” with that student and should be responsible for that student's education for the full school year. This condition applies to public schools, not just for the balance of the school year, but as long as the student is younger than 19 on September 1 of the school year. In the case of funded private schools, this recommendation would mean that they could be responsible for arranging an alternative program or transferring funding to a new school placement for the student involved for the remainder of the school year. This recommendation brings the responsibilities for public and private schools closer together and provides greater assurances to parents.

Accountability

The Task Force recommends that:

10. **In addition to the specific changes recommended by the Task Force, all other accountability requirements currently in place for funded private schools are appropriate and should be maintained.**

11. In cases where parents do not make up the majority of members on the board of a society operating a funded private school, a parent council should be required.
12. The Minister of Education should consider requiring routine additional information from funded private schools, including information related to admission and tuition policies and expulsions.

Comments While the Task Force acknowledges the views of some public school supporters who argued that private schools should meet all the same requirements as public schools, the Task Force believes that the current accountability requirements are generally adequate. Again, private schools should remain private. Their accountability should be to the parents they serve and to the Minister of Education.

We do not support suggestions that provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act should apply to accredited private schools. Private schools are private organizations and there are no other cases in which the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act has been extended to apply to private organizations. The Minister can request information from private schools which then becomes publicly available. We also have suggested that the Minister consider additional information requirements for funded private schools. This information would help in monitoring private schools, would ensure that private school policies are consistent with the recommendations outlined by the Task Force, and would help counter the misconceptions some people have about elitism and intolerance in the selection policies of private schools.

The Task Force also considered recommendations that conflict of interest provisions, similar to those which apply to public school boards, should be introduced. The Task Force believes that it may not be practical to implement these types of provisions, especially given the small size of some private schools and the communities in which they operate. However, we do encourage accredited private schools to develop policies on conflict of interest and to ensure that parents and board members are aware of the policies.

On the issue of parent councils, the Task Force is aware of the positive impact school councils have had in the public school system and we believe that parents should have similar opportunities in accredited private schools. At the same time, private school supporters indicated that in many cases, the majority of their board members are parents. In these cases, a parent council could be redundant. However, where private schools do not have boards or the boards are not made up primarily of parents, the Task Force

believes the parent councils should be a requirement. Parent councils in funded private schools need not meet all the same requirements as school councils in public schools but they should provide an avenue for parents to be involved in the school.

Education requirements

The Task Force recommends that:

13. Funded private schools should follow the same requirements for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies as public schools.
14. A new requirement should be introduced which specifically states that all private schools must not offer programs that in theory or in practice will promote or foster doctrines of racial or ethnic superiority or persecution, religious intolerance or persecution, social change through violent action, or disobedience of laws.
15. Each funded private school should be required to designate a principal who has an approved teaching certificate.
16. There should be regular on-site monitoring of funded private schools by Alberta Education.

Comments The quality of education children receive in private schools is a primary concern to Task Force members. In the majority of accredited private schools in Alberta, children are taught the Alberta Program of Studies and students meet the same standards set for public schools.

Task Force members believe that all Alberta students should receive high standards of education, whether that is in public or in private schools. We discussed the fact that some private school students can complete a high school education but not be eligible for an Alberta high school diploma or certificate of achievement because the program they took did not meet the requirements. Parents and students must be aware of the implications for entrance to post-secondary education and for getting jobs in the workplace. We have been informed that the majority of students in these cases go on to Bible colleges or complete their further education outside of the province. Nonetheless, this remains a concern.

By recommending that all funded private schools must follow the same requirements as public schools for teaching the Alberta Program of Studies, we recognize that there will continue to be flexibility in teaching methods and styles of education. Currently, programs provided in public schools

have to be prescribed, authorized or approved by the Minister. This same flexibility should continue to be available to funded private schools. At the same time, students in funded private schools should be expected to learn the same content and meet the same standards as students in public schools. In cases where a program other than the Alberta Program of Studies is approved for use in funded private schools, the program should be re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that it continues to meet the standards of the Alberta Program of Studies.

The Task Force understands that these recommendations will have an impact on a number of funded private schools which do not follow the Alberta Program of Studies but have been using an alternative program approved by the Minister of Education several years ago. For a number of funded private schools, this could mean significant changes to their high school curriculum in order to ensure that their students can qualify for an Alberta High School Diploma. The Task Force suggests these schools should have a period of time, likely a year, to make the necessary changes. These schools should continue their status as funded private schools while they are making the transition.

Also on the issue of education quality, the Task Force understands that parents who choose to send their children to private schools must play a major role in monitoring the quality of education their children receive. At the same time, parents expect private schools accredited by the Minister of Education to be monitored regularly. We recommend that on-site monitoring of funded private schools be provided on a regular basis. This will help assure the public and parents that the quality of education provided in funded private schools is satisfactory.

We also believe that educational leadership is as important in accredited private schools as it is in public schools. For that reason, we are recommending that funded private schools be required to designate a principal for their school and that the principal should be required to have an approved teaching certificate.

We have recommended a new requirement that specifically addresses concerns about intolerance. We want to make it clear that this recommendation has not been included because of any evidence that Alberta's accredited private schools are in any way providing programs which promote intolerance. We believe that Alberta's accredited schools are serious in their commitment to promoting understanding and reflecting the diversity of Alberta society. This provision is taken from requirements set out in British Columbia and is intended as a preventative measure and a clear signal of the direction we expect in all schools. Similar expectations for tolerance and understanding already apply to Alberta's public schools.

Tuition fees

The Task Force recommends that:

- 17. No changes should be made to the current practice in which funded private schools can set tuition fees with no limits set by government.**

Comments The view of Task Force members is that private schools should be able to charge whatever levels of tuition they think are appropriate. This is one of the basic aspects of being a private school.

The Task Force considered concerns expressed by some about the “elitist” nature of some private schools and the related concern that tuition fees should be limited by government regulation. In British Columbia, for example, government funding is reduced for schools which charge tuition fees above certain levels. At the same time, the Task Force believes that charging tuition fees is one of the elements which distinguish private schools from public ones. If parents choose private schools for their children, they should expect to pay a portion of the costs. The Task Force does not feel that regulations controlling tuition fees are appropriate. This is a matter that should be left to parents and the private schools they choose.

Other requirements for accredited private schools

The Task Force recommends that:

- 18. Accredited private schools should be required to operate as such for a minimum of one year before they are eligible for public funding.**
- 19. In the event of a school closure, funded private schools should be required to provide 30 days advance notice to parents and to Alberta Education, and student records should be forwarded to Alberta Education.**

Comments The Task Force believes that a minimum of one year waiting time should be required before private schools are eligible for public funding. This would allow time for a private school to be up and running, attract parents, and provide a stable program for students. It would encourage private schools to start up with a serious and deliberate plan in place for the schools to be viable over the longer term. The Task Force also feels that some notice should be required in the event that private schools close. The recommendation would provide for 30 days notice and also would mean that students’ records would not be lost when a private school closes.

The Task Force also considered recommendations on increasing the minimum number of students required to operate a private school. Currently, private schools are required to have a minimum of seven students from two families. Task Force members discussed some concerns about the ability of private schools to provide quality education programs for small numbers of students in a wide range of grades from kindergarten to grade 12. However, the issue was not raised by public or private school supporters during the review and therefore the Task Force has not included any recommendations on this issue.

Funding for special education private schools

The Task Force recommends that:

20. Special education private schools should be recognized as a unique and distinct category of private schools within the funding framework.
21. The school board, in consultation with professionals, parents and, where appropriate, the child, should determine whether or not the child is in need of a special education program. Once that need is established, the parents should be entitled to choose to send their child to an appropriate program provided by the public school board or an Alberta special education private school, if available.
22. In cases where a school board is unable to provide an appropriate program to meet the special education needs of a child, the school board should continue to be responsible for directing the child to an alternative program and paying all the associated costs involved.
23. As a matter of principle, if it is determined that a child is in need of a special education program, funding provided to support that child's education should be equivalent whether the child attends a public school or a special education private school.
24. If it is determined that a child is in need of a special education program, and the parent chooses to send the child to a special education private school, funding for that child's education should be transferred from the public school board to the special education private school.

25. On an annual basis, the Minister of Education should be responsible for setting the specific amount of “equivalent funding” to be provided to special education private schools. In principle, equivalent funding should include all per student funding provided to the public school board.
26. Alternative approaches to the current appeal process should be developed to streamline the process and consider alternatives such as mediation, arbitration and multi-year approvals.

Comments Consistent with the views we heard during the review, the Task Force recommends that special education private schools be considered as a separate and distinct category from other funded private schools. We recognize the fact that special education private schools are unique in many ways and therefore, should be considered as a separate category within the funding framework. Special education private schools are complementary to the public system and the objective should be to achieve a seamless system where public schools and special education private schools work closely together to meet the needs of the children involved.

Recent changes announced by the Minister of Education will increase funding for children with severe special needs and target a portion of the basic instruction grant for meeting the needs of children with mild and moderate learning disabilities. These changes appear to be a step in the right direction and will help address some of the concerns we heard about the level of funding provided for educating children with special needs.

In preparing its recommendations, the Task Force considered several important questions: Who should determine whether or not a child has special education needs? Should school boards continue to be responsible for approving the placement of a child in a special education private school or should parents be able to make this decision without approval from their school board, provided that it has determined that the child has a special education need? How should the funding level be determined for children in special education private schools? And what changes could be made to streamline the appeal process?

In terms of determining whether or not a child has special education needs, the Task Force understands that school boards have both an obligation and the responsibility for providing an education to all students. In the case of children with special education needs, we believe that the school board, in consultation with professionals, parents and, in some cases, the child, should be the ones to determine whether or not a child has a special education need. In the Task Force’s view, there is no practical alternative to this approach, particularly since the public school board has an obligation

to provide a program for the child. Parents can appeal the school board's decision if they disagree, but we understand that there are few cases in which parents and school boards disagree on whether or not the child has a special education need.

Once it is determined that a child has a special education need, school boards also must determine whether or not they can provide an appropriate program to meet that child's needs. If they cannot, the school board is responsible for directing the child to an appropriate program and paying all the associated costs involved. Parents can appeal the school board's decision if they disagree.

If the public school board can offer an appropriate program, the parents should continue to be entitled to choose the program offered by the public school or a program offered at a private school. Currently, if parents of children with special needs choose a private school, public school boards decide whether or not to provide funding to the private school in support of the parents' choice. In the event the school board decides not to financially support the parents' decision, parents can ask the Minister of Education to review the school board's decision. However, this has caused frustrations for some parents and school boards, pitting them against each other. The appeal for funding and the review process can be difficult and time consuming.

When parents choose to send their child to a special education private school, the Task Force believes that better arrangements are needed among parents, school boards and special education private schools. Whether a child attends an appropriate program in a public school or in a special education private school, the objectives should be the same: to address the child's needs, develop appropriate special programming, and, where possible, return the child to a regular classroom as soon as the child is ready. That means there should be a close relationship among parents, public schools and special education private schools.

The Task Force believes that the per student public funding for the child's education should be equivalent whether the child attends a public school or a special education private school. It is the parent, not the school board, that should make the decision of where the equivalent public funding goes.

We also believe that the Minister of Education should play a more direct role in determining annually the specific level of "equivalent" funding provided. We have suggested that public school boards should transfer to the special education private school the same amount of per student funding as they would receive for educating the student in the public system. School boards would not be expected to transfer the money they

receive for board governance and system administration. Currently, for students in the City of Calgary, this includes \$3686 for basic instruction, \$413 for operations and maintenance, and \$345 for urban transportation, for a total of \$4444 per student. The Task Force sees this as the minimum amount of funds the board should use to support parents' choice of a special education private school. The amount could be higher depending on various factors the Minister considers in determining equivalent funding.

We suggest that, in setting an equivalent level of funding, the Minister should consider the fact that all students in special education private schools have special education needs. For public schools, a block of funding is provided to meet the needs of all students, including about 10 to 12 percent of their students with special education needs. This is intended to allow school boards to balance the costs of providing programs for the majority of their students with the added costs of providing programs for children with special needs. In special education private schools, this balancing is not possible because all their students have special education needs and their programs are more costly to provide.

We also suggest that the Minister consider the fact that parents have chosen to place their child in a special education private school over an appropriate program in a public school. This means that parents currently are responsible for costs the special education private school charges above and beyond what the board supports when it transfers funding to the special education private school. These costs are sometimes very significant.

On the issue of appeals, the Task Force heard concerns from parents about the complexities and frustrations of appeal processes. By recommending that parents should have the choice to send their child to an appropriate program in either a public or a special education private school, we believe that the number of appeals should be reduced. At the same time, parents can continue to appeal in cases where the school board determines that a child does not have a special education need or if a school board decides it can provide an appropriate program for a student and the parents disagree. Alternatives should be considered which would streamline and shorten the process of appeals. Consideration should be given to mediation or arbitration approaches and to options such as multi-year approvals so parents are not required to go through a similar process every year.

Concluding comments

The Task Force's objectives have been these:

- to review current information and clarify the facts about funding for Alberta's private schools
- to listen to the full range of views of Albertans
- to consider various options and alternatives, and
- to make recommendations which strike an appropriate balance and most important, put the interests of children first.

We hope our report and recommendations have achieved those objectives.

We appreciate very much the time people devoted to express their views, whether that was by attending public meetings, writing letters, preparing submissions or completing the Task Force's workbook. Our recommendations have been guided, first and foremost, by the views we heard from Albertans from one end of the province to the other. We also want to express our appreciation to staff at Alberta Education and others who provided assistance to the Task Force in completing our work.

Finally, we understand that there will be some on both sides of the issue of funding for private schools who will be disappointed with the Task Force's recommendations. Throughout our discussions, we have tried not to side with one particular view or another, but to be open to new ideas and new solutions ... to try to strike the right balance ... to find common ground ... and to set out a clear rationale for future decisions about funding for private schools. We hope that the framework and rationale we have provided will provide guidance not only to government but to those who work in and support all aspects of Alberta's education system.

Appendix 1

1997 Public meetings

October 3	Medicine Hat	Medicine Hat Lodge
October 4	Lethbridge	Lethbridge Community College
October 7 & 8	Calgary	Jubilee Auditorium
October 9	Red Deer	Red Deer Lodge
October 27	Grande Prairie	Grande Prairie Inn
October 28	Fort McMurray	Sawridge Hotel
October 29	Vermilion	Lakeland College
November 13 & 14	Edmonton	Chateau Louis Conference Centre

List of presenters

Individuals

Cathy Abbruzzese	Dave Butler	Mike Hermansen
Bill Anderson	Paula Carey	Kurt Hofman
Marie Anstey	Lyle Cunningham	Linda Hulak
Sandy Antononi	Bill Deacon	Dan Jack
Shannon Bailey	Jan Debney	Katherine Jakober
Janice Barth	Len Dehek	Donna Janz
Joanne Bast	Colleen Dibden	Gerald Kereliuk
Melinda Benzler	Peter Doell	Ruth Kereliuk
Mike Beriault	Jake Drozda	Justin Knibbe/Christopher
T. J. (Larry) Betmers	David Eifert	Artindale,
Joanne Beukema	Elaine Faber/Froukje Brouwer	students -Heritage Christian
Susan Black	Lloyd Fell	School
Deborah Blair	John Fleck	Dwayne Konynenbelt
Anne Blough	Susanne Gamache	Brad Kun
Ivan Boles	Debbie Girling	Kim Kun
Otto Bouwman	Dwight Goltz	Mike Laffin
Cindy Bruin	Caroline Greentree	Ella Land
Robert Bruinsma	Gordon Hall	Debbie Landis
Rochelle Budwill	Joop Harthoorn	Rick Lane
Allison Burnett	Cal Hauserman	Keith Laycock

Teresa Leinweber	Nellie Perlick	Colleen Taylor
Maureen Linden	Duncan Prescott	Shannon Taylor
Elayne Lorenz	Linda Price	George Thatcher/Eric Tait/
Karen Lyons	Gaylene Pridham	Norma Thompson
Rick MacDonald	Edward Pue	Dr. Elmer Thiessen
Evelyn and Brian Martin	Sharon Purvis	Larry Thompson
Pat Massey	Maynard Puurveen	Tony Toews
Don McDonald	Duane Roset	Doug Tordoff
Roger Mestinek	Linda Seberg	Colin Tynedal
Victoria Motil	Tim Seitz	Brenda Valvrio-Lovell
Glen Mullen	Malcolm Sissons	Chris Vanden Petersam
Anna Nicolai	Duane Skaley	Gary Vandergrift
Doug Norton	Larry Slack	John Vanveen
Jane O'Dea	Susan Smienk	Tedd Walcott
Joanne Opdendries	Helga Spence	Kathleen Wheeler
Leslie Owsley	Leif Stolee	Doug Wilems
Jennifer Pendergast	Timothy Stonhouse	Murray Woods

Organizations

Airdrie Koinonia Christian School - Brian Hazeltine, Principal
 Akiva Academy - Rabbi Allen Saks, Principal/Sheila Marten/Neil Wagner
 Alberta Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development - Dale Wallace
 Alberta College - Brenda Cook, President/Margaret Wong, Vice-Chair of Board of Governors
 Alberta Federation of Labour - Audrey Cormack, President
 Alberta Federation of Women United for Families - Corry Morcos
 Alberta Home and School Association - Christine Ayling, Vice-president
 Alberta Home and School Councils' Association - Elizabeth Dobrovolsky, President
 Alberta Home and School Councils' Association, Central Alberta Region - Janessa Wade, Director
 Alberta Ratepayers Association - Ed Wolf
 Alberta School Boards Association - Dr. Roy Wilson, President/Davie Anderson, Executive Director
 Alberta School Boards Association Zone IV/Battle Regional Division No. 31 - Michele Mulder
 Alexander Forbes School Council - Wayne Campbell, committee representative
 Aspen Grove Parent Council - Jane Cada-Sharp/Bob Bedier, Co-chairs
 Association of Christian Schools International - Jake Paetkau, Regional Director/Dennis Punter, Council representative
 Association of Independent Schools and Colleges - Jack Vanden Pol, President
 Banbury Crossroads School - Rudy Dutka, President/ Diane Swiatek, Principal
 Beaver Lodge School Council - Brenda Jones, Chair
 Bertha Kennedy Catholic Community School Council - Mary Wood/Mike Wood
 Black Gold Regional Division No. 18 - Ursula Stewart, Board Chair
 Bluffton School Council - Deneen Evans/Bonnie Emery/Connie Jensen/Bruce Beck, parent & teacher representatives
 Brander Garden School - Mildred Richardson, chair/Mary Wagner, member

Buffalo Trail Regional Division No. 28 - Richard Van Ee
 Burdett School - Wendell Mills, Principal
 Calgary Christian School - Jim Lindemulder, Board member
 Calgary French School - Martin Halliday, Board of Directors representative
 Calgary Home and School Association - Kim Zelt, Treasurer
 Calgary Public ATA Local - Kurt Moench, President
 Calgary School District No. 19 - Liz Lovecchio, Trustee
 Calgary Waldorf School - Don Hobbsbawn, Treasurer/Peter Murdock, Principal
 Calvin Christian - William Grisnich, Principal
 Campbelltown School Council - Maureen Townes
 Canada Family Action Coalition - Roy Beyer/Birdie Grymaloski
 Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2545 - Randy Craner, Vice- president
 Capilano School Council - Judith Evans/Caroline Bowler, Co-Chairs
 Central Alberta Christian School - Harry Wildeboer
 Cherry Coulee School - Les Martens/Jim Babe
 Christian Education Association - Peter Prinson, Executive Director
 Christian Reformed Community - Phil Stel
 Christian School International - Ary DeMoor, Coordinator
 Citizens for Public Education - Brian Rothwell, representative
 Citizens Impact Coalition - Phil Horch, Chair
 Clearview Regional Division Board of Trustees - Dr. Bill Baergen
 Cogito, Edmonton Public Alternative Program, Mt. Pleasant School - Marilyn Cox
 College Heights Junior Academy - Bruce Butler, Chair
 College Heights School Council - Ken Hubbard
 College of Alberta School Superintendents - John Hogarth, First Vice-president
 Connaught School - Heather Lemeshuk, School Council representative
 Cornerstone Christian Academy - Marvin Weber, Chair/Jo-Ellen Lyslo, Principal
 Cornerstone Christian School - Roy Bassingthwaighte, Chair
 COSAC, Elk Island - Mark Ackerman
 Covenant Canadian Reformed School in Neerlandia - Adrian Hamoen
 Covenant Christian School - Gayle Monsma, Principal
 Daly Grove Parent Council - Sheila Hradoway/Brenda Ross/Mary Grant
 Ecole Dickensfield - Sharon Turner, Principal / Faye Derocker, School Council Chair
 Edmonton and District Labour Council - Alex Grimaldi, President
 Edmonton Catholic Regional Division No. 40 - Terry Fortin, Superintendent/Jim Urlacher, Board Chair/
 Muriel Dunnigan, Director of Administrative Services
 Edmonton Catholic Schools ATA Local - Ray Roy, President/Gerry McHugh, Executive Secretary
 Edmonton Chamber of Commerce - Mary Stephenson, Chair of Education sub-committee
 Edmonton Christian Schools - Hans Van Ginhoven
 Edmonton Public Teachers Local - Peter McNab, President/Jim MacLaren, Executive Secretary
 Edmonton School District No. 7 - Gloria Chalmers, consultant/George Nicholson, Board Chair
 Elk Island ATA Local - Glen Buchan, President
 Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14 - Kim Stubbs, Trustee
 Faith Lutheran School - Glen Schmitke
 Foothills Academy Parent Advisory Committee - Carol Mairs/Mike Brummit/Kathy Fedori

Foothills Academy Society - Gordon Bullivant, Principal
 Fort McMurray and District Labour Council - Lynn Gorman
 Fort McMurray ATA Local - John Vyboh
 Fort McMurray Catholic No. 32 - Jim Moore, Trustee/Dan McIssac, Superintendent
 Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce - Debbie Robert, Chair of Education Committee
 Fort McMurray Christian School - Jeff Thompson
 Fort McMurray School District No. 2833 - Sharon Clarkson, Board Chair
 Fort Saskatchewan Christian School - Boyd Jahnke, Board Chair/Lisa Clarke, Principal
 Genesis Christian School - Susan Maxwell, Principal/Trevor Neil, Superintendent
 Glenmore Christian Academy - Beth Andreasen, Chair/Ken Humphreys, Board Chair
 Glenmore Parent Teacher Association - Sheila Greckol
 Grande Prairie Christian School - Keith Ackerman
 Grande Prairie School District No. 2357 - Clyde Blackburn, Vice-chair
 Harry Balfour School Council - Dana McIntosh/Ava Marcoux-Dala
 Helen E. Taylor School Council - Lorne Hommy, Chair
 Heritage Christian School - Bill Ardiel, Chair
 Heritage Christian School - Darren Wertin
 Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 4 - Del Homulus, Trustee/
 Frank Letain, Superintendent
 Hope Christian School - Mark Losey, Principal/Larry Losey, Pastor
 Horizon School Division No. 67 - Mrs. Sharon Holtman, Trustee
 Immanuel Christian Secondary School - Mike Hoyer, Principal
 Independent Baptist Christian Ed. Society - Pastor Brian Coldwell, General Director/Chair
 J. R. Robson School Council - Sherri Heller
 Janus Academy - Linda Cook/Tom Ziegler, Board Members
 John Wilson Elementary School - Sharon Pickard/Ken Borgstrom, members of school council
 Kensington School Council - Bev Eslinger/Art Robinson, Principal
 King's College - Dr. John Hiemstra, Associate Professor
 Lacombe Christian School - Jack Oudman
 Lakeland Christian Academy - Allan Amesmann, Treasurer and Principal
 Lawrence Grassy Middle School Council - Myrna Quinlan/Helmi Bracco
 Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta - Dave Barnum
 Learning Disabilities Association, Calgary Chapter - Sheila Kerr
 Lethbridge Christian School - Val Clifton, Vice-principal/Bruce Hubbard, Principal
 Lethbridge School District No.51 - Gary Kiernan, Superintendent/Greg Anderson - Vice-Chair/
 Diane King, Trustee
 Life Values School - Sharon Steinhauer/Carl Christiansen, Principal
 Living Faith Christian School - Terry Burnett/Peter Engle/Pastor Cliff Stalwich
 Lloydminster Public District - Don Duncan, Superintendent/Dr. Raffath Sayeed, Trustee/
 Jeff Dubyk, Board Chair
 Lori Czersinski/Barb Douglas/Peggy Duszynski - School Council representatives from three Okotoks schools
 Mallaig School Council - Richard Michaud
 McKernan School Council - Ray Benton-Evans/Donna Meen
 Meadowlark Christian School - Judy Jeski/Joy McKenna/Ilyne McTeer/Stefan Krueger
 Medicine Hat ATA Local - Doug LaMarche, President

Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 20 - Judy Bergum, Board Chair
 Medicine Hat Christian School - Rob Craats, Treasurer
 Medicine Hat High School - Larry Samko, School Council representative
 Medicine Hat School District No. 76 - Cathy Nelson, Co-chair, alternative school
 Medicine Hat School District No. 76 - Karen Charlton, Trustee
 Millet Elementary School Council - Janice Covin
 Millwoods Christian School Council - David Kaye, Vice-Chair
 Newell Christian School - Ralph Light, Principal
 North & Central Peace Christian School Society - Roy Hewko
 North Calgary Christian Academy - James Albers
 Northern Lights Regional Division No. 69 - Peter Doonanco/Walter Hayduk
 Palliser Regional Division No. 26 - Rosalee Hanna-Homulus, Board Chair
 Parents as Partners in Education - Harold Neth/Lynn Odyński
 Park Plains ATA Local - Darryl Anderson
 Parkside Parent Council - Kip Kurylo/Florence Stewart
 Peace River School Division - Anita Dent, Board Chair /Dave Van Tamelin, Superintendent
 Peace-Wapiti ATA Local - Joan Godbout
 Peace-Wapiti School Division No. 33 - Lynne Phillips, Board Chair/Erin Sawchuk/Trustee/
 Jim Robertson, Trustee
 Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7 - Clayton Jespersen, Board Chair
 Prairie Bible Institute - Rick Downs, Superintendent
 Prairie Rose Regional Division No. 9 - Stan Krause, Board Chair/Wendy Geldreich, Trustee/Les Brost, Trustee
 PREP Program - Barbara Tiem, Program Co-ordinator/Susan Roskey, Vice-president, Board
 Public School Boards' Association of Alberta - Clyde Blackburn, President/David King, Executive Director
 Red Deer Christian School - Bob Duggan, Principal/Bob Bartell, Vice-principal
 Red Deer Public - Dave McMechan, School Council President
 Red Deer School District No. 104 - Lenore Harris, Board Chair
 Rideau Park School Council - Sandy Haggins
 Ridgevalley School Council - Mary Morrison
 Rimbey Christian School - Henry Vandermeer, Principal
 Rimbey Elementary School Council - Vivian Lapointe-Longman/Brenda Watts/Angela Keates
 Rocky Christian School - Robert Boodt, Board Chair
 Rocky Christian School Society - Cornelius Heystek, Finance Committee
 Rocky View School Division No. 41 - Sharon Harripersad, Trustee/John Murray, Trustee/
 Lorne Kosack, Vice-Chair
 Seventh Day Adventist - Robert Crux, Superintendent
 Sir Alexander McKenzie School Council - Valerie Hole, Chair
 Society for Christian Education in Southern Alberta - Henry Heinen, vice-principal, retired
 SPEAK - Joanne Cuthbertson
 St. Albert PSSD No. 6 - Lois Hole, Trustee
 St. Jerome's School - Wes Neumeier, Administrator
 St. Matthew Lutheran Church and School - Ivan Boles, Vice-Chair/Bill Ney, Pastor/Eric Ladoski, Principal
 St. Paul Education Regional Division No.1 - Ted Cabaj, Superintendent/Terry Laboucane, Trustee
 Strathcona Christian Academy - Peter Dubbeldam, Chair/Jim Seutter, Superintendent/Al Borkent, teacher
 Sunnyside School, Palliser Regional Division - Geri Trautman, School Council

The Alberta Teachers' Association - Charles Hyman, Associate Executive Secretary/
 Bauni MacKay, Provincial President
 Town of Three Hills - Kevin Edwards, Councillor
 Trinity Christian School - Doug Walker
 Tyndale School Society - John Hoogerdijk
 Victory Christian School - Doug Zieber
 Wainwright School Council - Dean Lindquist , Principal and representative
 Webster Niblock Elementary School Council - Erin Penzes, School Council Chair
 West Island College - Brian Soutiere, Representative of Education Committee and Board
 Westbrook Elementary School Council - George Takach, President/Jo-Ann Kolmes, Vice-President
 Westview School Council - Ann Fordham
 Westview School Staff - Sandy McCarthy, teacher/Paula Hanson, Vice-Principal/Gary Kinnell, Principal
 Wetaskiwin Regional Division No. 11 - Doug Sirrs , Trustee
 Wild Rose Elementary School Council - Evelyn Keith, Chair
 Wm. E. Hay School, Stettler and teachers of Clearview Regional Division - Doug Gregory
 Wolf Creek ATA Local - Evelyn Lockhart, Teacher/Terrence McBride, Vice-president/Bob Huff, Teacher
 Word of Life School - Paul Bateman. Principal

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For more information

The following reports have been prepared for the Task Force as part of our deliberations.

- *Summary of Written Responses*
- *Private Schools Funding Survey Results* - Population Research Laboratory, University of Alberta

If you are interested in any of those reports or would like further information, please contact:

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